

INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON INVASIVE AQUATIC PLANTS AND NUISANCE SPECIES
Meeting Minutes, Thursday, April 16, 2009
Bolton Hill Facility, Augusta, Maine

Introductions and Action Items from Previous Meeting

After introductions, John McPhedran ran through action items from the October 2008 meeting. Following are updates on those action items.

Central List of Invaders

- Dale Pierson said the focus should be on plants and Russell Danner added that declaration of a fish as invasive may be lake or watershed specific. Dan Buckley suggested that PEARL website could host information on invasive species other than plants (hosted by DEP and VLMP/CIAP) and fish (hosted by DIFW).
- Buckley suggested creation of a central website (e.g., invasivesinmaine.gov) with links to PEARL (already includes some information on fish species occurrences), VLMP (information on invasive aquatic plants and some other organisms online), DEP (list of known aquatic plant infestations in Maine and other info on State program), DIFW (nuisance fish info).
- This central website would include a one page explanation of the complexity of invasive fish issue. Joe Dembeck said similar summaries already exist on DIFW website.
- Scott Lowell added that species information and links should eventually be folded into the Courtesy Boat Inspection (CBI) Program, e.g., at least included in the CBI Handbook.

Action: McPhedran will re-send the links to the Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program's Center for Invasive Aquatic Plants (VLMP/CIAP) and PEARL websites.

Action: Task Force (TF) members will review the VLMP/CIAP website and submit any comments or suggestions to VLMP/CIAP.

Action: A small group (Ed Courtenay, Buckley, Ann Gibbs, and Dembeck) will work with McPhedran to investigate establishing the central website and content.

Agency updates

DIFW

Russell Danner reported that the bill which would have allowed commercial harvesting of a nuisance fish in a particular lake (nuisance designation declared by the DIFW Commissioner) was voted ought not to pass by the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. The bill was opposed because of concern over opening the door to numerous requests for intentional harvest of "unwanted" fish species and about potential by-catch (how can DIFW be sure that the commercial harvest would be specific to the target species?). The Committee directed DIFW to develop an animal damage control program to deal with nuisance fish.

Scott Williams asked if there is an additional role for the Task Force (TF) to play to move toward management of unwanted species by DIFW. Danner commented that the result of the bill, i.e., DIFW should allow fish removal for research purposes through animal damage control program, is movement in the right direction. Danner added that he doesn't see a role for the TF at this time. He will come back to the TF if roadblocks arise.

Gregg Sanborn of the Warden Service distributed DIFW's testimony on the bill for TF members' information and review.

DOC

McPhedran emailed an update prior to this meeting describing the Maine Natural Areas Program's invasive plant outreach at three locations in spring 2009.

DEP

McPhedran updated the Task Force on the following:

- TF information is now posted on the DEP website (see http://www.maine.gov/dep/blwq/topic/invasives/interagency_task_force/index.htm)
- State Action Plan Review Process: plan not ready for review by TF
- Summary of January meeting with cooperators: no major changes to DEP's Invasive Aquatic Species Program structure. DEP scrutinized budgets for 2009 contracts.
- Revenues and inspection data for 2008 as presented at the 2009 Milfoil Summit.

McPhedran reported that a citizen contacted him to discuss potential for an increase in the Lake and River Protection sticker to increase revenue for prevention efforts (esp. boat inspection programs). Pierson felt that a sticker fee increase is not warranted now due to the state of the economy but should be considered in the future. Buckley reminded the TF of the possibility of creating a separate voluntary sticker to raise additional funds for invasive species work. Gregg Sanborn of the Warden Service noted that there is still relatively high compliance among boaters with the Lake and River Protection Sticker requirement.

Regarding the annual Milfoil Summit, Pierson wondered if the audience is generally the same each year and suggested it may be helpful to consider if we're reaching new people each year. If not, is the expense and effort of the Summit worthwhile? Laura Wilson suggested DEP consider a name change for the Summit since it's more than just milfoil.

Federal Earmark Proposal for Invasive Plant Control Funding

Scott Lowell said that there is still potential for funds to help milfoil control efforts but that supporters need to continue calling and sending emails and letters to the congressional delegation.

Invasive alga *Didymosphenia geminata*, aka rock snot

McPhedran updated TF members on Fly Fishing in Maine's (FFIM) effort to build three pilot wash stations to prevent the spread of the alga Didymo. The sites are on the Presumpscot River, at Middle Dam, and at the Lower Dam landing on the Rapid River. The project was initiated by Steve Smith of Friends of Forest Lodge on the Rapid River. Ken Beaulieu, who's coordinating this effort for FFIM, is also working with wading boot manufacturers to either stop using felt or reduce the felt thickness from 10 mm to 6 mm (research in New Zealand found no conclusive evidence that a disinfectant solution would penetrate the full 10 mm).

Greg Ponte, interested public at the meeting, asked why there couldn't be more than three pilot wash stations since numerous sites need them. He also wondered why the TF couldn't recommend prohibition of felt-soled waders. McPhedran asked Ponte to email fishing hot spots where wash stations can be easily maintained.

There was considerable discussion of wash station design and the TF role, if any, in advocating for a prohibition on felt-soled waders in Maine. Potential TF roles discussed included:

- A letter from the TF to retailers who purchase waders for resale in Maine. Some TF members expressed concern about TF writing directly to businesses rather than going through established channel of working through state agencies and the Land and Water Resources Council (in statute)
 - A letter from the TF to DEP and DIFW Commissioners explaining threat of spread by felts.
- One suggestion was to approach Maine agencies first and then consider banding with other state commissioners to approach businesses
- A TF effort to educate anglers with the goal of reducing the demand for felt waders
 - Placing signs at large retailers in Maine (LL Bean, Cabela's)
 - Incorporating Didymo into existing state *Action Plan for Managing Invasive Aquatic Species* before sending letter to state agency heads or Land and Water Resources Council.

The discussion concluded with general agreement that the TF would send a letter to the Land and Water Resources Council. The letter would express TF concern with the issue and tell the LWRC that the TF will incorporate Didymo into the state Action Plan. Danner felt that the letter should wait until after Didymo is in the Action Plan, such that the letter would ask LWRC for help on needs identified in the plan, but generally the TF wanted to move ahead with drafting the letter before formal incorporation of Didymo in the Action Plan.

Action: Buckley will draft letter, work with McPhedran on it, and eventually pass along to TF for their review and approval.

Special Assessment Districts for funding invasive aquatic species prevention and control – George Powell, DOC

Powell explained changes to existing legislation that would be needed to enable formation of special assessment districts. These districts would not be mandatory. TF agreed to discuss at next meeting.

Action: McPhedran will distribute documents provided by Powell prior to next TF meeting.

Issues surrounding nuisance fish spread prevention and management – Joe Dembeck, DIFW

Dembeck gave an informative presentation including:

- discussion of what constitutes an introduced species (sometimes specific to a particular waterbody)
- summary of type and number of introductions in recent years (the five most prevalent nuisance fish are habitat generalists; there have been no known largemouth bass introductions in the last several years)
- enforcement (the Warden Service gets 5 to 10 convictions for transporting fish but it's virtually impossible to catch someone in the act of stocking a water)
- DIFW's rapid response process, including response forms for tracking
- removal methods

Public Comment: None

Carryover or ongoing action items from previous meetings

Action: Agencies to send brief update of activities to John McPhedran for distribution prior to TF members prior to the meeting.

Action: Task Force to consider idea of voluntary sticker.

Minutes prepared by John McPhedran